Zebra Mussel Veligers

What are "ZM Veligers"?

Zebra Mussel Veligers are the free-swimming larvae of Adult Zebra Mussels. Smaller then the period at the end of this sentence veligers can potentially cause a lot of damage.

Why should I worry?

Zebra Mussels reproduce at rapid rates. One female can produce up to **1,000,000** eggs a season! Each egg has the potential to develop into a veliger and then into an adult.

Never put any exotic species back in the water!!!!

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What can I do to help?

There are many ways in which you can help control the spread of zebra mussels and zebra mussel veligers.

Be a detective – Look for and remove any plants or animals from your boat or trailer.

Drain your boat - motor, livewell, bilge and transom well on land before leaving the boat launch.

Never release bait. Empty your bait bucket into the trash.

Wash your boat and equipment before going to a new area, OR **Dry** them the sun for five days.

Call your local DNR for more information or to report any exotic species you find

How are veligers dispersed?

Dispersal can happen easily. Below are some of the most common dispersal methods.

- **Transfer of water:** Emptying bilge tanks, bait buckets, live wells, and transom wells into the lake or river.

- **Failure to clean aquatic plants off of boats and trailers.** Veligers and other exotic species hitch a ride on the moist plants.

- **Failure to pressure wash or dry boats stationed in a lake** - especially if they have been moored there for a period of time.

What do veligers look like?

Veligers are microscope, ranging in size from 40 um - 200 um (a um is a micrometer.) A 40 um organism is 0.0004 cm long. The picture shown below was taken with the aid of a microscope.

The size, shape, and coloring of the zebra mussel veliger will vary when observed under microscopic power, due to the different stages of veliger development.

Why are water bodies being tested for Zebra Mussel Veligers?

Some water bodies within Wisconsin are being tested for zebra mussels. Testing for veligers helps to identify lakes where zebra mussels have become established. This allows water resource managers to implement programs to reduce or help stop the spread of zebra mussels among Wisconsin water bodies.